

WILLIAM A. LITTLE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
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TYREE SCOTT
FORMER PRESIDENT, CENTRAL CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION
FORMER PRESIDENT, UNITED CONSTRUCTION WORKERS ASSOCIATION

INTERVIEWEE: TYREE SCOTT

INTERVIEWERS: WILLIAM LITTLE

SUBJECTS: CENTRAL CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION; UNITED CONSTRUCTION WORKERS ASSOCIATION; BLACK CONSTRUCTION WORKERS; WHITE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS; NEGOTIATIONS; RACISM; DISCRIMINATION; LEGAL SYSTEM; COURTS; AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE; PAUL KING; NATE SMITH; NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MINORITY CONTRACTORS; DEMONSTRATIONS; SHUTDOWNS; BUILDING TRADES UNIONS; MEDGAR EVERS POOL

LOCATION: SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

DATE: OCTOBER 12, 1975

INTERVIEW LENGTH: 00:50:28

FILE NAME: ScottTyree_WLOHP_19751012_Audio_acc2610-003.mp3

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[00:00:00] **TYREE:** The CCA [Central Contractors Association] came at a time when folks were trying to interpret the word "Black power" or green power or whatever else. I personally was in a situation where I worked for my father, who was an electrical contractor, and I worked in the office managing the company, so to speak.

There was a real problem that existed, and it still exists today, of course, in terms of small businessmen. The small contractors were, in essence, tradespeople, tradesmen who were not able to get into the building trades. A carpenter who couldn't get into the building trades would do work in his trade. That meant like building houses, remodeling houses, remodeling kitchens, adding on rooms, et cetera. Because he had to get a license to do business like that on his own, so he went into business and became a contractor. My father was not unlike any of those people. He learned a trade as an electrician, and he couldn't go down to the local trade union and join it, so he did the next best thing. You know, to work in the trade, you've got to take out a licence and become a contractor. So there were a bunch of people like him around who had the skills and went into business. Then there was the new person, the new contractor who had in some cases—just the idea of real estate brokers who would decide that contracting was a good business, and you would go out and hire someone to do the work and you just manage it.

[00:02:05] **WILLIAM:** So would it be fair to say that the reason why they went in business was because the union was discriminatory against them?

[00:02:13] **TYREE:** Yeah, the most preferred jobs were the higher paying ones.

[00:02:18] **WILLIAM:** So in other words, they bypassed the system in some way, in that—

[00:02:24] **TYREE:** They became businessmen, small businessmen. And the barriers that exist for small businessmen, particularly—and you know, Blacks included—they had to be able to ensure that they could do the work, so they had to take out bonds, and that means like putting up ten percent of the cost of a particular project. And so that automatically limits you to the size of the job that you can do. In the case of my father and most other people...

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

So anyway, people like my father were limited to doing five thousand dollar jobs, at the most ten thousand dollars. And that's not very much, when you talk about the margin of profit being like five, seven percent. That's not very much. So, him and a lot of other contractors were in that situation.

There was also the problem of the question of labor. They then had to do the same thing. They had to find a Black labor force because the white labor force was the trade union labor force, and they couldn't get them because of the cost involved in the trade union contracting. And then, if, in fact, they were trade union contractors they had an all-white work force, which makes sense, because there were no Black workers in the trade union. We looked at it on a very narrow basis, that we got to get some people to get some larger jobs and stuff. So the analysis we used was that if a Black contractor who was a general contractor, who in most cases was a carpenter, was able to get a big job, then he would sub-contract his work to other Black contractors, and thereby would open the industry up for Black workers.

But one of the barriers was, for Black contractors and Black workers, the barrier was that they couldn't get the bond, for example, or they were not invited to bid on certain jobs because of the size of them. It was a foregone conclusion that the Blacks couldn't bond themselves, and so that's how we came together. A lot of the contractors we asked to come to meetings and stuff, and we sat down and talked about the common problems: the inability to get bonds, and the fact that there was no efforts being made on the part of large contractors, generally white contractors, to hire or to offer bid to small Black contractors to projects. So we thought if we organized and formed an association, we could approach the industry and make some demands on them, but also at the same time, provide certain services for those contractors. They didn't have the ability to bid certain

projects, even though in some cases, they could perform the work, if they could get the job. But the problem was getting the job in the first place. So provide certain technical services for those folks, provide some kind of channel for making loans or operating capital. So that's basically what CCA was organized for.

What we consider now to be the basic contradiction that came up was, in that struggle to get contractors jobs, we also saw the thing that finally kicked it off into the public image that it has today, was that we had some successes at being able to get contractors some larger jobs, but that meant joining the union or becoming a union contractor, because there were no places to get a skilled labor force that was necessary to do that kind of work. So what we did was that those contractors who were then breaking the ice and had pressure being applied, they gave in to some degree, so now you got—my father was one example, and there were others who had started to do fifty thousand, sixty thousand, seventy thousand dollar projects. This then required that you hire ten electricians instead of one electrician, or five electricians instead of one. So that meant then that you get your workforce from the trade union, and the entire membership of the trade union was white.

If we look at that just from a honest point of view, then clearly we'd say, well, so what? We're in this to make money, that's the goal of a corporation is to make profit, but we've mixed the social stuff up with the whole question of looking at it from a race level. And so naturally, Blacks were applying for jobs at Scott's electric and other Black contractors' offices in the Central Area, and the answer was always the same, that we get our workforce from the trade union. It was like applying for a job at Howard S. Wright in the white community. He tells them, "We get our workforce from the trade union. You must go down there." And of course, the trade union would tell him, "You've got to have a job or a skill already, or there are no openings. We've got people out of work already." So we were caught in the catch-22 situation, and some of us didn't understand that, most of us didn't understand it. We weren't just talking about purely making profits, so we started struggling over the question of being able to hire white workers.

So finally one day, two young Black guys came into the office and was talking to the secretary about getting a job. They were like eighteen, twenty years old. And we told them the regular thing, that you go down to the trade union, that we can't hire you, that we only hire from the trade union. That same morning we had just called the union hall for two apprentices, and we got two young white apprentices. Well, that made us mad.

At the same time they were building a swimming pool here at Garfield, the Medgar Evers swimming pool. The swimming pool had about thirty-five or forty workers on it, and a couple of them were Black. They were laborers, and they were being paid, in addition to the contract. The contract, let's say, was for two hundred thousand dollars, and the cost of two additional workers, who were laborers, who were Black, was, say, ten thousand dollars for a six month period, or whatever time the duration of the project was. And the contractor had gone to the Seattle Model Cities program. See, in order to have Black workers, they had to have an additional amount of money to hire these two Black laborers.

So we discussed it one night at a CCA meeting and decided that the negotiations that had been going on with the employers, with the trade unions and stuff about allowing us to have Black workers had been fruitless. So we decided to take some direct action by like running the employee out of the neighborhood. It was all white contractors and an all white workforce, so we closed down the construction job.

[00:10:52] **WILLIAM:** Let's back up. Is Central Construction Workers [sic] still the central organization at this time?

[00:10:57] **TYREE:** Central Contractors Association.

[00:10:58] **WILLIAM:** Is Central Contractors Association still the primary organization at this time?

[00:11:02] **SCOTT:** Mhm. [affirmatively]

[00:11:03] **WILLIAM:** Okay, I just wanted to make sure that was clear in my mind.

[00:11:06] **TYREE:** It's the organization you mean?

[00:11:10] **WILLIAM:** Right. So otherwise you hadn't made the transition, the transition hadn't occurred?

[00:11:14] **TYREE:** No. There's a definite, complete separation of those two. One of them is the management organization that deals with employers, you know, the contractors. The UCWA is a workers organization, that addresses itself to the needs and problems of the employees.

[00:11:32] **WILLIAM:** Okay, I recognize that. I was trying to figure out when did the split occur? And I didn't—I guess I'm getting a little ahead of you.

SCOTT: No, no. See, these kinds of demonstrations and direct action that took place took place under the name of Central Contractors Association in 1969.

Okay, let's go back to that, where I interrupted you at.

[00:11:57] **TYREE:** This was in the fall of 1969.

[00:11:59] **WILLIAM:** Fall of 1969. When did this organization start, in the first place?

[00:12:03] **TYREE:** In March.

[00:12:07] **WILLIAM:** March of what?

[00:12:08] **TYREE:** Of 1969.

[00:12:12] **WILLIAM:** Okay, will you start back again on the Garfield thing?

[00:12:16] **TYREE:** Yeah. So we closed down the project. As a result of that, there was a community effort. The community could relate to the fact that they passed that swimming pool every day, and the workforce was all white, and there was a high unemployment rate in the ghetto. And so there was a lot of community support. That was at the tail end of the mass Civil Rights Movement, and folks had that kind of consciousness and would turn out for street demonstrations and so on. That snowballed into street demonstrations that went on throughout the fall of '69. There were job closures in downtown Seattle, there were job closures at the University of Washington, and the Seattle-Tacoma Airport.

[00:13:05] **WILLIAM:** Garfield, University of Washington, and airport. Okay, and this is all fall of '69?

[00:13:19] **TYREE:** Yeah.

[00:13:22] **WILLIAM:** You've talked about Garfield and talked about developing support, broad support, community support. What was the result, what was the consequences of that particular demonstration at Garfield?

[00:13:37] **TYREE:** The result of it is that the contractors made some effort to—well, you see, what they had in effect was a collective bargaining agreement with the trade unions which said, in effect, that you can not seek an alternative labor force external to the trade unions. So the employer was caught in a situation where he then had to hire somebody from the Black community to satisfy the people in the Black community, and in doing so, he had to violate his collective bargaining agreement, which made him liable under law. And of course by doing it, the white workers could walk off the job, because it's a violation of the contract. [coughs] And the Black workers were not able to maintain, to man the job. And as a result, the job couldn't go on. So there was some legal action, legal steps taken at that point in time. We went to the courts to enjoin the white workers that were coming back to work. The court didn't see it, the workers must come back to work, and they must come back under the status quo that they left under. Of course, that was before they had Black workers on the job. That was also the case at Seattle-Tacoma airport, there was a case at the King County Building downtown, there was a case at the University of Washington, and so on.

So now we've got approximately sixty to seventy Black workers on these jobs, which is probably an increase of sixty to seventy people, in most cases. These guys don't have skills as a plumber, but he's not a plumber, he's in effect— [interruption]

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

The first day at Garfield, we recognized that one particular contractor, [?Witt?] was the name of the company, that particular contractor didn't have the ability to change the industry. And we knew that we were up against the industry rather than a particular employer. So there was no negotiations that took place between us and the contractor. The demand was that he close his job down until he was able to meet his affirmative action requirements under the law.

[00:16:17] **WILLIAM:** Where did the affirmative action requirements come from?

[00:16:21] **TYREE:** In this particular situation, he had agreed to hire x number of Black workers on his project.

[00:16:28] **WILLIAM:** Prior to—what—who did the negotiating take place between when he made this agreement?

[00:16:35] **TYREE:** In his contract, the specifications, there was a—in 1965, Lyndon Johnson signed an order, Executive Order 11246. That executive order talks about non-discrimination in public employment, and so where there's public money involved, they must take some kinds of steps to come within hiring the amount of Third World workers that make up their community, the area that their work force comes from. So in Seattle, it might have been ten percent of the population is Black and Brown, so therefore the requirement is that he hire those people. He wasn't able to do that, and of course, we didn't start negotiating until the next day. We went downtown and did the same thing at the King County Building, and the following day, at the—well, it's now the Public Health Hospital, but it was old King County Hospital, and then the University the following week. We were at the University doing the same thing. Then at that point—well, no, then we went to the airport.

So by mid-week, there was several hundred million dollars worth of construction projects sitting idle. I don't remember the figure now, you might find a copy of Seattle Magazine, it's a defunct magazine, but it was a magazine that was out here. In the December '69 issue, there's an article on that whole struggle that took place during that period of time.

The white workers then reacted and responded by going into the streets. Seven thousand of them marched to Olympia to protest the Black violence, or whatever that was taking place in the streets. But at the same time, they got us into negotiations, by contractors negotiating with...

[00:18:56] **WILLIAM:** With the industry?

[00:18:57] **TYREE:** Yeah, with people both in the industry, both management and labor, and also the public sector. So King County was involved in it, the City of Seattle was involved with it because of the Fire Station, we had stopped at the fire station that the city was building.

[00:19:14] **WILLIAM:** Okay, let me put that down. Fire station and the public officials.

[00:19:27] **TYREE:** So the public officials were the City of Seattle, the county commissioner—

[00:19:38] **WILLIAM:** That's the King County executive.

[00:19:39] **TYREE:** The State of Washington...

[00:19:49] **WILLIAM:** Was it the governor's office or the Department of Labor and Industries?

[00:19:52] **TYREE:** The governor's office, the governor himself, the governor of the whole state. [laughs] The University of Washington, and the Port of Seattle.

[00:20:08] **WILLIAM:** Who was from the University of Washington? At that time it was [Charles] Odegaard?

[00:20:13] **TYREE:** No, it was the vice president in charge of finance. I'll think of his name later. He's still the vice president in charge of finance now.

[00:20:29] **WILLIAM:** Who was from the Port Commission, Port of Seattle?

[00:20:32] **TYREE:** Richard Ford. And John Spellman from King County.

[00:20:41] **WILLIAM:** John himself was there?

[00:20:42] **TYREE:** Yeah. Dan Evans, and [Wesley] Uhlman—no, Uhlman wasn't the mayor at that time, [Floyd] Miller was the Mayor. Miller a sitting duck at the time—what do you call it? A lame duck. He was not involved in negotiations. I remember now—oh, and Ed Devine was the assistant mayor, and Ed Devine was sitting in on the negotiations. And of course the leadership in the trade unions were involved in it. The Building Trades Council was representing the trade unions, Austin St. Laurent. Dan Rutherford was representing the contractors.

[00:21:32] **WILLIAM:** Dan who?

[00:21:32] **TYREE:** Rutherford. He's the general manager of Howard S. Wright.

[00:21:34] **WILLIAM:** How do you spell that?

[00:21:36] **TYREE:** R-U-T-H-E-R-F-O-R-D. He was President of the AGC [Associated General Contractors], he was acting as an officer and the general manager and treasurer of Howard S. Wright Corporation. So from the names of those people, you can see we went from an idea in April or March to like being with the biggies in

the fall. We were all sitting at the table with the governor. We were like, we didn't want to offend nobody, we didn't know where we were going on one level. At the same time, we had responsibility to the community, like to get something out of it. We were also in the courts, we had lawyers, and it was a united front.

[00:22:43] **WILLIAM:** Who was your lawyer?

[00:22:44] **TYREE:** Lem Howell was the lawyer for the Central Contractors at the time. He's in the Metropole building.

[00:23:04] **WILLIAM:** I know that, yeah.

[00:23:05] **TYREE:** So, the different—the issue at that point was that number one, Blacks be hired on those jobs that were ongoing at a rate that they represented in the community. This was what we were putting forward. We were also saying that the Black contractors should be able to be bonded at a much higher rate and more money than what they were, and that they be given an opportunity to be on projects, and that there be a certain amount of projects set aside for minority contractors. So that was a certain kind of atmosphere that we were operating in, and of course we didn't know—I mean, those folks had much more experience at it, much more skilled at it, and that was the end result: the industry was not able to absolve the kinds of things we were talking about. There was a question of how were they going to satisfy us. [pauses]

In retrospect, they took the only avenue that was open to them, and it was to put the burden on the white workers to give up some of their jobs. The other thing they could've done, of course, was to cut down on the amount of money they were going to make on those projects and hire an additional amount of people in the workforce. Those people would be by and large unskilled, and it would cause them to lose more money. So what they did was put the burden—through the courts, through their arguments, through the law. The court ruled that the white workers must go back to work with the status quo.

The status quo at that point then—I skipped over that—was that the contractors had agreed unilaterally from the unions to take on these additional Black workers. Of course, what that meant was that then these workers could then do part of the work. That meant that instead of having an eight dollar plumber carrying a pipe up to the fifth floor, they could take and put a four dollar apprentice. That's what the Black worker would have to be paid, because he wasn't skilled. And so it was in the interest of the employers. So they bought that, and so they hired a certain amount of Black workers on each job. So as a result of that, the white workers then walked off the jobs, cause what was happening was you didn't need three plumbers, you needed like two plumbers and a helper, and they didn't have that. So we were doing, just in effect, what the employer wanted us to do. We was providing him with a cheaper source of labor. And the white workers of course, then, being more sophisticated, or their leadership anyway, and also the whole reaction of racism, they walked off the jobs. And that was very easy for the leadership to get them to do.

So as a result of that, there was no work going on. So then the courts ordered the white workers back to work under the status quo, which meant go back to work, but with these white workers there'd be Black workers on the job. And they came back to work. Well, there are other ways of dealing with workers on the job, so the foreman was also a trade union member and has an allegiance to his fellow white workers. And the white worker, keep in mind, knows what's happened to him. He realizes these Blacks have now come on the job and taken his job. Remembering how racist he is, in essence, he didn't create that situation. And so they're angry.

That was, in retrospect, the whole thing was the white workers didn't want to work with us, they're racist. And so they then found systematic ways, like running a Black worker off the job. The Black worker, at the same

time, might be twenty-five, thirty years old. He's never had no job, ain't got no tools, is coming to work in his high heeled shoes, and doesn't fit in, and also is alienated from his white counterpart, who is hostile to him, or whatever. So as a result, he shows up late, don't show up at all, gets into an argument with him. So a month later, out of sixty workers, ten of them are left. And so the street demonstrations, we started up again, the same kind of thing.

In the meantime, there was still some negotiations going on about satisfying the needs of these minority employees, getting them bonds and whatever else, and that's something that doesn't work out overnight. It might take three months for a job to come up for bid, and to be bid, and to be let, and so on. So the situation with the contractors had not gotten ironed out. Then the people who were the leadership who were putting forward these demands are saying that one demand, the most public demand, is being met, which is that Black workers should be working on these jobs. At the same time, the principal problem they're having had not been dealt with yet, and so there's like a struggle that starts to take place within our organization over the question of what was our number one priority: more jobs for Black contractors or more jobs for Black workers? In retrospect, my class background made me deal with the question of Black workers, and I was the president of the organization, and by and large was able to make decisions with a small amount of people and maintained as a core both the community and members of the Association.

In late November, the situation—well, in early November, the situation was that these people who had gotten on these jobs had been thrown off, the bonding companies and banks were hedging on the agreements to underwrite the bonds through the Black contractors. And so we went back into the streets, and back at the airport again, and stopping work in different places. As a result of that, the Justice Department came to Seattle and filed a lawsuit against five trade unions for their discriminatory practices. Some people saw this as a solution to the problem, and some of us didn't see it as a solution. The more moderate contractors who didn't want to spend time with what they saw was their major obstacle wanted to address themselves to the question of better and larger bonds. And the other side of us was talking about making them meet the demands that we already put forward that they'd agreed to.

So these lawsuits that primarily take from four to five years to litigate was filed in November. The court ruled on it in February and issued its release in June, it went into effect. We've been involved in subsequent lawsuits that are five years old that are still in some stage of litigation and not being litigated. But it's a classic example of the law operating in the interest of management, again, and that kind of problem was going on because the courts saw fit to litigate the case in such a fashion, with such expediency to deal with the problem. And the court then did the same thing it had done the first time, in what we can expect out of the courts in this kind of society.

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

They did the first time, the courts said that, "Okay, the trade union must take in Black workers into each trade union, and the additional jobs gotten by these Black workers should be in addition to, not in lieu of, the existing jobs." So in retrospect, again, when we look back at it, what the courts in effect did—and within the confines of the law, there was no law that said—I mean, Title VII in the '64 Civil Rights Act, it said that there cannot be discrimination in employment. There ain't no title in this Civil Rights Act that says you must share the wealth. I mean, they all say that you must not discriminate in housing, education, use of public money, and so on, but none of them say that you must share in the wealth.

And so what the court did was not put the burden on the employers. The Justice Department didn't come in and sue the employers for not creating an additional amount of jobs, they sued the trade unions for blocking Black

workers. So the court ruled in our favor and issued some very broad relief, and said take in what amounted to the first year, maybe a hundred and fifty Black workers and every subsequent year ninety Black workers. And naturally, we saw the white worker as being our enemy because of his racism and the fact of the historical relationship we'd had with them in running the Black workers off the job, so we didn't contest it, even though the court said these jobs would be in addition to, not in lieu of, existing jobs.

So as a result of that, four years later, we can look at the apprenticeship program in the electrician's union and see that in 1969 there was twenty-five apprentices and they were all white, but in 1973 there was twenty-five Black apprentices and no white apprentices. And so those jobs were in lieu of white jobs, they were not in addition to. And so as a result of that, white workers saw us as like a very job competition kind of way. The employers—and [white workers] then saw us as the enemy, the relationship was antagonistic.

The employers, at the same time, saw us as an alternative source of labor in the very beginning, and so the court—even though the court issued an order saying, "Put these people to work by June 10, 1970," there was nobody put to work. So for the third time, we rose up and went to the streets. At this point we were UCWA [United Construction Workers Association], and I have to go back and talk about what happened in the meantime. But the courts then said, "Put these people to work," after the initial demonstrations and, "If you don't put these folks to work within ten days, I'm going to have contempt of court." And so the employers then said, "Well, we can't have that." So here we got us an additional work force, and again, it's much more important to have a four dollar an hour apprentice rather than have a five dollar an hour journeyman, or a ten dollar an hour journeyman, or whatever the case is in terms of wages. And so the employers, instead of the trade unions, set up procedures to dispatch out these new Black workers onto these jobs. And so we were happy with that. Within ten days time, we had put ninety Blacks to work in June 1970. The same kinds of problems occurred and stuff, but then we were organized as a worker's organization, and so we over a period of years learned how to and deal with the problems of the workers. As a result of that, we had five hundred Blacks in those trades where, based on the court's records, there were only ten in 1969.

And so we talk about that and what that means in terms of progress, or whatever, and I'll lay it out later, but I'll go back and talk about CCA and why that transition was made from one to the other. And again, we didn't have no analysis of what the society was about, and we didn't understand that those differences would come up at some point as forces that we would grapple with. And at the same time, there was the opportunists who was neither a tradesman and who couldn't get a job and became an employer, or a real estate broker who started building to make money. All the cats who was running the Black Power game because he was Black, or to have some more money, or to be able to make money in this very lucrative industry. And there were a lot of those folks who subsequently came to the contractors organization, and who, very correctly, raised the question of, "Wait a minute, why are we talking about people getting jobs when we, in fact, are an employers association? We should be talking about us getting more contracts, which we have also neglected." And there was a struggle that ensued over the question of whether or not we should drop this whole worker thing. I mean, the thing was that if we could get the jobs, then we'll hire these Black workers, and they'll be treated fairly. But some of us knew just theoretically, we understood the fact that we weren't talking about a whole lot of jobs. That those Black contractors five years later, looking back at it, we knew that, still, they can't even absorb the five hundred Blacks that we were talking about. So by not recognizing and putting enough energy into that, we made the mistake of arguing the point that we were more correct than they were. So as a result of that, we were booted out.

[00:38:11] **WILLIAM:** So in other words, that is why the business leaders, construction contractors saw that the policies and directions it was going wasn't in their best interest at all? And it was due to the fact that the

organization became—certain bourgeois contractors was attracted to the organization, to join the organization, which in a sense forced a change in terms of the position of the organization?

[00:38:47] **TYREE:** Yeah, I mean, that's correct. But also, people on the other side, they would just see like who in the leadership of the Central Contractors was pushing for the question of jobs for Black workers, and who was pushing for more contracts for Black contractors. As a result of that, even though I was the president, I was also rejected by the press as the leadership of the Association, and therefore people tended to relate to me, and I had the larger share of the power than other contractors who were equally as concerned about getting contracts. And as a result of that, the position that I was putting forward, if you look back at it, in terms of the workers was good, but it was in the wrong context.

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

I think it would be liberal to say that like I agree with all the motives, cause there was clearly some very opportunistic motives involved, and some of the guys were like overtly just thieves, and they ended up getting booted out of the Association leadership, and they ended up getting booted out of the Association because they were ripping off the money. There was money available for loans and stuff like that, and they took the money and bought cars and all kinds of stuff. But they were correct in saying that we are an employers association, and that we need to be talking about employers' problems. We were talking about the problems of employees, and the result was that they ended up kicking us out. Us was like just a couple of people, me and a couple of other people who were not necessarily employees, either, but like staff of the Association, and so on.

About three or four months later—and of course the problem was still there, the problems of the workers, they were getting kicked off the jobs and so on—I was approached by the American Friends Service Committee to see if I would like to do some more work in that whole area. At that point I was disillusioned, I didn't understand what it went to.

[00:41:11] **WILLIAM:** American Friends Service, what?

[00:41:13] **TYREE:** American Friends Service Committee, the Quakers. That's a strange kind of thing. There was a guy who was the executive secretary of the Service Committee—the Service Committee is an organization, something like a service organization. But there was an executive out here in this particular region who had very good insight into that kind of problem—I thought he did—and was interested in like where it was going, since the whole issue had died away. All this took place in about February of '70. They were talking to me during that time.

At about that time, of course, nothing had happened in terms of people being hired. Those guys that had been hired earlier, those sixty people I was talking about, were by and large all gone from their jobs. A lot of other things were taking place in between then. That whole thing took place about the same time that it was taking place in the rest of the country, and I started to come back. But you remember, it was in—

[00:42:34] **WILLIAM:** Philadelphia, you're talking about?

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

[00:42:43] **TYREE:** And so, it was a very spontaneous kind of movement that took place here. I mean, I told you that it started on a day, but sometime during that same week or during that same month, the workers in Pittsburgh and in Chicago went out in the street doing the same kinds of stuff. But they were all having them

apart, the people didn't know each other, we were not in touch with each other in no way. There were a couple people in the country who knew that it was happening, and we started to get involved in—there was an organization formed called the National Association of Minority Contractors that we had joined, the Central Contractors Association was a member of the National Association of Minority Contractors at that point. There was also a guy from Chicago who was very much involved in the street demonstrations around the job stuff in Chicago who was also in the National Association of Minority Contractors, and there was a local group there. The Urban Coalition was then involved with the Minority Contractors Association, the National Association, and the result of the Urban Coalition's involvement in the Association was they were able to come together and talk about the great work we were doing in our local places. And of course they had their motives, for whatever they were. And as a result of that between September and June of the following year, we were moving all around the country, talking about what we'd been doing in our hometown, in terms of opening up the discriminatory construction industry to Black workers.

[00:44:57] **WILLIAM:** That was in 1969, 1970?

[00:44:59] **TYREE:** Yeah.

[00:45:00] **WILLIAM:** 1970?

[00:45:01] **TYREE:** Winter of '69 and spring of '70. I'm talking about the period, was around for about a year or so. But we were moving around the country, just talking to minority contractors and talking to seminars with lawyers. This also took on a very legalistic kind of overtone also, because of the [Ironworkers] Local 86 case and other related kinds of legal stuff, and there was a lot of attention given to it.

So on one hand, I'm having the kinds of problems here in Seattle with the contractors, and on the other hand, we're moving around the country talking about what a great job we're doing, flying first class and all of that. The guy from Chicago was called [Paul] King, and the guy from Pittsburgh was named Nate Smith. And in Pittsburgh of course, they had then, while here we had five hundred people at the airport, they had had five thousand people in the streets of Pittsburgh and five thousand people in the streets of Chicago. But qualitatively, it was the same thing.

So next, and the end of that particular—at the end of the winter, at the end of the spring, Nate had gone from an obscure equipment operator to the director of Operation Dig, which was in a federally funded community project to get Blacks into the construction trades, making fifteen thousand dollars a year, and he had a five thousand dollar consultant contract from the firm, and a five thousand dollar job as a part-time instructor at the University of Pittsburgh or something. And Paul was making contact, Paul was very astute and articulate, and was able to make contact with the secretary of labor over here and have Art Fletcher running in and out of Chicago, and he was wearing Brooks Brothers suits and smoking eight inch cigars. We were flying all over the country first class, talking about what a good job we had done and stuff. But in Seattle, as in Pittsburgh, as in Chicago, there were no Black workers working as a result of their struggle. I mean, we weren't accountable to nobody. At that point I'd been booted out of CCA for whatever reason. [interruption]

[BREAK IN RECORDING OF INTERVIEW]

And so Paul wasn't accountable to nobody. That's not true, he was with the contractors, but Paul was pretty much clear on who he was responsible to, and so he didn't get booted out of the contractor's association. As a

matter of fact what he was doing—they were taking advantage of the situation and all the visibility, and they started to get contracts for minority contractors and for themselves, because he was a contractor.

[00:48:22] **WILLIAM:** That's in Chicago?

[00:48:24] **TYREE:** Yeah. And at the same time, he wasn't neglecting Black workers. The Chicago trade unions don't have no mess like they have in Seattle. They weren't about to give in and stuff, there was no lawsuit involved, as there was here. And so they devised a plan called the Chicago Plan, [interruption] which as a result, two years later the director of that plan runs off with eighty thousand dollars in money that belonged to the government and was subsequently indicted, and so on. But there was—Paul wasn't quite as bad as Nate was doing in Pittsburgh. We went to a meeting there about a year later, and Nate was so illegitimate in his community in Pittsburgh that he had the meeting at the airport, at a Howard Johnson motor inn, cause he couldn't go into his neighborhood and be there like that, cause the local folks would come in and break it up. I mean, he was doing well, and I was doing well. I mean, I wasn't getting paid like he was getting paid, but I was moving around and talking and really confusing myself with what we had done. And so, about April or May I started looking into what that meant.

[00:49:45] **WILLIAM:** That's in 1970?

[00:49:49] **TYREE:** Yeah. I started thinking seriously about the proposal the Service Committee had put forward, and that was to try to organize workers to deal with their problems themselves, rather than employers.

[00:50:11] **WILLIAM:** So when did you start—well, let's stop right here, since you gotta go. We'll start with when you started the United Construction Workers Association.